

Daily Herald, April 19, 2008

Closing the so-called "terror gap" that allows those on the no-fly list to buy guns legally is the top federal gun sales law reform goal of U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk and other local gun control advocates.

"That reform should have widespread bipartisan support," Kirk said at a news conference Friday. He hopes to see the closing of the loophole attached to an appropriations bill in Congress within the next few months.

The "terror gap" is among a number of gun sale loopholes recently identified at a congressional hearing on illegal guns in Washington, D.C. Kirk, of Highland Park, said he wants to begin spreading public awareness of them.

They also include a "gun show loophole," in which guns can be purchased at trade shows without a background check, and a "fire sale loophole" that allows dealers whose licenses have been revoked to sell off remaining inventory without background checks.

"Current law protects the inventory, and I don't believe the inventory should be protected," Kirk said.

He also wants to require background checks for all gun store workers who handle guns.

Joining Kirk Friday were Palatine Mayor Rita Mullins, a member of Mayors Against Illegal Guns; Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran; ATF Special Agent-in-Charge Andy Traver; and Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence Executive Director Thomas Mannard.

Several illegal guns confiscated in the Chicago area were on display in Kirk's Northbrook office

Friday, including a gold-plated AK-47 said to have been brought back from Saddam Hussein's palace in Baghdad before it ended up on the streets.

The group also called for stepped-up enforcement in what they see as lax areas of the country where people from anywhere can go to obtain weapons for crimes.

In fact, more than 300 guns used in Chicago-area crimes have been traced to just four gun shops in northern Mississippi -- three in Clarksdale and one in Tunica. That's according to the Mayors Against Illegal Guns, based on ATF data.

The mayors group also reports that a recent audit of 3,000 Federal Firearm Licensees discovered more than 12,000 gun records to be missing. And 11,000 of these came from only 97 of the 3,000 licensees.

Mullins, who grew up in a gun-owning family and has a firearm owners ID card, said these measures aren't intended to take guns out of the hands of sportsmen. They target the handguns and assault weapons, which she feels there is no legitimate reason for civilians to own.

As mayor at the time of the 1993 Brown's Chicken slayings in Palatine, Mullins said the issue of gun violence is not a new one for her.

"Illegal handguns equals blood money, the blood of our children," she said.

Mullins called on officials to show courage and common sense, saying those who call for tougher gun control are often targeted for defeat by opposition groups.

"Sometimes you feel a little lonely talking about these measures, and it shouldn't be that way," said Mannard, of the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence.

This article was edited to comply with Franking Commission guidelines